The New Israeli Guardians-2011

Name of program
The New Israeli Guardians

Year of activity
2011

Name of the report's writer
Ainat Israel

Function of the report's writer
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Status of program
Today, there are 54 participants in HaShomer HaChadash's Young Leadership Program, a more than 100% increase from the number of 2010/2011 participants. The program has grown in scope and depth, and the participants are working the land, helping farmers and ranchers in the north, learning intensively on subjects such as Jewish and Israeli identity, Zionism, Arabic, the bible, and civic responsibility. Participants are learning and experiencing the Zionist ideals on which the State of Israel was founded. They are learning to care for and about the land, and the values of social activism and mutual responsibility to Israel and the Jewish people.

Main achievements during the last year of activity
Last year, 2010/2011, was the pilot program of the The Young Leadership program. The 14-
A month work-study-volunteer program was a transformative experience for the participants. They spent an intensive year learning about their Jewish and Israeli identities, Zionism, the Bible, Arabic, and training to be HaShomer HaChadash volunteer guardsmen, protecting the land of farmers and ranchers in the north.

Special activities and events included: Identity week, when participants explored their personal identity, their family identity and their national identity; Tu B'Schvat planting with participants and parents, an incredible Shabbat in Jerusalem, delving into ancient Jewish history and contemporary issues facing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel; Purim party in Jerusalem; field training to be volunteer guardsmen; visit to the Sea of Galilee in the footsteps of "The Second Aliyah"; a day at the Machon HaShitim where participants learned about the holidays of Israel, with focus on the holidays during the month of Tishrei.

The main achievements of the first Young Leadership Program was the intense self-exploration the participants went through, the significance this had on their personal growth, their awareness of their responsibility to be socially active Israeli citizens and their motivation to serve in elite combat units upon entering the army after the program's completion. Of the 23 participants, 16 went on to serve in the army's most elite combat units, such as the Navy Seals, the Paratroopers, Shaldag and Duvdevan.

For the participants, the Young Leadership Program was a springboard to a deeper understanding of who they are in a Jewish and Israeli context, what connotes a meaningful life for them and how they can make a difference in society. The values that they learned and lived during the program will be with them and direct them into their future.

**Evaluation**

This was the first year of the program. As such, the evaluation consisted of personal interviews with the participants and the teaching instructors, as well as evaluation by HaShomer HaChadash's educational director.

During the interviews, the majority of participants expressed deep satisfaction with the program and said that it had a significant affect on them.

**Others**

There were over 20 events throughout the year, including the events listed above and in addition, major highlights included: a moving graduation ceremony at the statue of Alexander Zaid, a social activism conference in which HaShomer HaChadash brought over 500 dynamic young people from HaShomer HaChadash's Leadership Program and five pre-military leadership academies all over Israel to explore the role that each person needs to take in making Israel a more just society.

The conference, held at the Rabin Center in Tel Aviv, was titled, "The Nation Demands, but First We Must Do", and it stressed the importance of social protest, but at the same time the need to take action on the ground to make change happen; to be mutually responsible one for the other, and for our nation and our people.
Featured guests included Silvan Shalom, Minister for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee. Shalom praised the work of HaShomer HaChadash, and of the young people in the audience for their commitment to doing something meaningful for Israeli society.

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